

1608 / 5894

The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED

AT PRINCETON, on the 17th of MAY, 1776.

B E I N G

The GENERAL FAST appointed by the
CONGRESS through the UNITED COLONIES.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ADDRESS to the NATIVES of SCOTLAND,
Residing in AMERICA.

BY

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.

President of the College of NEW-JERSEY.

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TO THE HONOURABLE
JOHN HANCOCK, Esq;
PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;
IN
TESTIMONY
OF THE HIGHEST ESTEEM
FOR
HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER
AND,
PUBLIC CONDUCT,
THE FOLLOWING
S E R M O N
IS HUMBL Y INSCRIBED
BY
HIS MOST OBEDIENT
HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR,

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S E R M O N, &c.

PSAL. lxxvi. 10.

Surely the wrath of Man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Blair

THERE is not a greater evidence either of the reality or the power of religion, than a firm belief of God's universal presence, and a constant attention to the influence and operation of his providence. It is by this means that the Christian may be said, in the emphatical scripture language, *to walk with God, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible.*

THE doctrine of divine providence is very full and complete in the sacred oracles. It extends not only to things which we may think of great moment, and therefore worthy of notice; but to things the most indifferent and inconsiderable: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, says our Lord? and one of them falleth not on the ground without your heavenly Father; nay, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* It extends not only to things beneficial and salutary, or to the direction and assistance of those who are the servants of the living God; but to things seemingly most hurtful and destructive and to persons the most refractory and disobedient. He over-rules all his creatures, and all their actions. Thus we are told, that *fire, hail, snow, vapour and stormy wind, fulfil his word*, in the course of nature; and even so the most impetuous and disorderly passions of men, that are under no restraint from themselves, are yet perfectly subject to the dominion of Jehovah. They carry his commission, they obey his orders, they are limited and restrained by his authority, and they conspire with every thing else in promoting his glory. There is the greater need to take notice of this, that men are not generally sufficiently aware of the distinction between the law of God and his purpose; they are apt to suppose, that

that as the temper of the sinner is contrary to the one, so the outrages of the sinner are able to defeat the other ; than which nothing can be more false. The truth is plainly asserted, and nobly expressed by the Psalmist in the text, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

THIS psalm was evidently composed as a song of praise for some signal victory obtained, which was at the same time a remarkable deliverance from threatening danger. The author was one or other of the later prophets ; and the occasion probably the unsuccessful assault of Jerusalem, by the army of Senacherib king of Assyria, in the days of Hezekiah. Great was the insolence and boasting of his generals and servants against the city of the living God, as may be seen in the thirty-sixth chapter of Isaiah. Yet it pleased God to destroy their enemies, and, by his own immediate interposition, to grant them deliverance. Therefore the Psalmist says in the fifth and sixth verses of this psalm, *The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep. None of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob ! both the chariot and the horse are cast into a deep sleep.* After a few more remarks to the same purpose, he draws the inference, or makes the reflection in the text, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain :* which may be paraphrased thus, The fury and injustice of oppressors shall bring in a tribute of praise to thee ; the influence of thy righteous providence shall be clearly discerned ; the countenance and support thou wilt give to thine own people shall be gloriously illustrated ; thou shalt set the bounds which the boldest cannot pass.

I AM sensible, my brethren, that the time and occasion of this psalm, may seem to be in one respect ill suited to the interesting circumstances of this country at present. It was composed after the victory was obtained ; whereas we are now but putting on the harness, and entering upon an important contest, the length of which it is impossible to foresee, and the issue of which it will perhaps be thought presumption to foretell. But as the
truth,

truth, with respect to God's moral government, is the same and unchangeable ; as the issue, in the case of Sennacherib's invasion, did but lead the prophet to acknowledge it ; our duty and interest conspire in calling upon us to improve it. And I have chosen to insist upon it, on this day of solemn humiliation, as it will probably help us to a clear and explicit view of what should be the chief subject of our prayers and endeavours, as well as the great object of our hope and trust, in our present situation.

THE truth, then, asserted in this text, which I propose to illustrate and improve, is,----*That all the disorderly passions of men, whether exposing the innocent to private injury, or whether they are the arrows of divine judgment in public calamity, shall in the end, be to the praise of God.* Or, to apply it more particularly to the present state of the American Colonies, and the plague of war,----*The ambition of mistaken princes, the cunning and cruelty of oppressive and corrupt ministers, and even the inhumanity of brutal soldiers, however dreadful, shall finally promote the glory of God, and in the mean-time, while the storm continues, his mercy and kindness shall appear in prescribing bounds to their rage.*

IN discoursing of this subject, it is my intention, through the assistance of divine grace,

- I. To point out to you in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God.
- II. To apply these principles to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in the important crisis.

I. IN the *first* place, I am to point out to you, in some particulars, how the wrath of man praises God. I say, in *some* instances, because it is far from being in my power, either to mention or explain the whole. There is an unsearchable depth in the divine counsels, which it is impossible for us to penetrate. It is the duty of every good man to place the most unlimited confidence in divine wisdom, and to believe that those measures of providence

providence that are most unintelligible to him, are yet planned with the same skill, and directed to the same great purposes as others, the reason and tendency of which he can explain in the clearest manner. But where revelation and experience enables us to discover, the wisdom, equity, or mercy of divine providence, nothing can be more delightful or profitable to a serious mind, and therefore I beg your attention to the following remarks.

IN the *first* place, the wrath of man praises God, as it is an example and illustration of divine truth, and clearly points out the corruption of our nature, which is the foundation-stone of the doctrine of redemption. Nothing can be more absolutely necessary to true religion, than a clear and full conviction of the sinfulness of our nature and state. Without this there can be neither repentance in the sinner, nor humility in the believer. Without this all that is said in scripture of the wisdom and mercy of God, in providing a Saviour, is without force and without meaning. Justly does our Saviour say, *The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Those who are not sensible that they are sinners, will treat every exhortation to repentance, and every offer of mercy, with disdain or defiance.

BUT where can we have a more affecting view of the corruption of our nature, than in the wrath of man, when exerting itself in oppression, cruelty, and blood? It must be owned, indeed, that this truth is abundantly manifest in times of the greatest tranquility. Others may, if they please, treat the corruption of our nature as a chimera; for my part, I *see* it every where, and I *feel* it every day. All the disorders in human society, and the greatest part even of the unhappiness we are exposed to, arises from the envy, malice, covetousness, and other lusts of man. If we and all about us were just what we ought to be in all respects, we should not need to go any further for Heaven, for it would be upon earth. But war and violence present a spectacle still more awful. How affecting is it to think that the lust

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of domination should be so violent and universal? That men should so rarely be satisfied with their own possessions and acquisitions, or even with the benefit that would arise from mutual service, but should look upon the happiness and tranquility of others, as an obstruction to their own. That, as if the great law of nature were not enough, *Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*, they should be so furiously set for the destruction of each other. It is shocking to think, since the first murder of Abel by his brother Cain, what havock has been made of man by man in every age. What is it that fills the pages of history, but the wars and contentions of princes and empires? What vast numbers has lawless ambition brought into the field, and delivered as a prey to the destructive sword?

IF we dwell a little upon the circumstances, they become deeply affecting. The mother bears a child with pain, rears him by the laborious attendance of many years; yet in the prime of life, in the vigour of health, and bloom of beauty, in a moment he is cut down by the dreadful instruments of death. *Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood*; but the horror of the scene is not confined to the field of slaughter. Few go there unrelated, or fall unlamented; in every hostile encounter, what must be the impression upon the relations of the deceased? The bodies of the dead can only be seen, or the cries of the dying heard for a single day, but many days shall not put an end to the mourning of a parent for a beloved son, the joy and support of his age, or of the widow and helpless offspring for a father, taken away in the fulness of health and vigour.

BUT if this may be justly said of all wars between man and man, what shall we be able to say that is suitable to the abhorred scene of civil war between citizen and citizen? How deeply affecting is it, that those who are the same in complexion, the same in blood, in language, and in religion, should, notwithstanding, butcher one another with unrelenting rage, and glory in the deed? That men should lay waste the fields of their fellow subjects, with whose provision they themselves had

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been often fed, and consume with devouring fire those houses, in which they had often found an hospitable shelter?

THESE things are apt to overcome a weak mind with fear, to overwhelm it with sorrow, and in the greatest number are apt to excite the highest indignation, and kindle up a spirit of revenge. If this last has no other tendency than to direct and invigorate the measures of self-defence, I do not take upon me to blame it; on the contrary, I call it *necessary* and *laudable*,

BUT what I mean at this time to prove by the preceding reflections, and wish to impress on your minds, is the depravity of our nature. *From whence come wars and fighting among you, says the apostle James *, come they not hence, even from your lusts, that war in your members?* Men of lax and corrupt principles, take great delight in speaking to the praise of human nature, and extolling its dignity, without distinguishing what it was, at its first creation, from what it is in its present fallen state. These fine speculations are very grateful to a worldly mind. They are also much more pernicious to uncultivated and unthinking youth, than even the temptations to a dissolute and sensual life, against which they are fortified by the dictates of natural conscience, and a sense of public shame. But I appeal from these visionary reasonings to the history of all ages, and the inflexible testimony of daily experience. These will tell us what men have been in their practice, and from thence you may judge what they are by nature, while unrenewed. If I am not mistaken, a cool and candid attention, either to the past history, or present state of the world, but above all, to the ravages of lawless power, ought to humble us in the dust. It should at once lead us to acknowledge the just view given us in scripture, of our lost state; to desire the happy influence of renewing grace each for ourselves; and to long for the dominion of righteousness and peace, when *men shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-books*;

* James iv. 5.

*books ; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more * , †.*

* Micah iv. 3.

† I cannot help embracing this opportunity of making a remark or two upon a virulent reflection thrown out against this doctrine, in a well known pamphlet, *Common Sense*. The author of that work expresses himself thus, ' If the first king of any country was by election, that likewise establishes a precedent for the next ; for to say, that the right of all future generations is taken away, by the act of the first electors, in their choice not only of a king, but of a family of kings for ever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture, but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free will of all men lost in Adam ; and from such comparison, it will admit of no other : hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed ; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan, and in the other to Sovereignty ; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last ; and as both disable us from re-assuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows, that original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonourable rank ! Inglorious connection ! Yet the most subtle sophist cannot produce a juster simile *.' Without the shadow of reasoning, he is pleased to represent the doctrine of original sin as an object of contempt or abhorrence. I beg leave to demur a little to the *candor*, the *prudence*, and the *justice* of this proceeding.

1. Was it *modest* or *candid* for a person without name or character, to talk in this supercilious manner of a doctrine that has been espoused and defended by many of the greatest and best men that the world ever saw, and makes an essential part of the established Creeds and Confessions of all the Protestant churches without exception ? I thought the grand modern plea had been, freedom of sentiment, and charitable thoughts of one another. Are so many of us, then, beyond the reach of this gentleman's charity ? I do assure him that such presumption and self-confidence are no recommendation to me either of his character or sentiments.

2. Was it *prudent*, when he was pleading a publick cause, to speak in such opprobrious terms of a doctrine, which he knew, or ought to have known, was believed and professed by, I suppose, a great majority of very different denominations ? Is this gentleman ignorant of human nature, as well as an enemy to the Christian faith ? Are men so little tenacious of their religious sentiments, whether true or false ? The prophet thought otherwise, who said, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods ?* Was it the way to obtain the favour of the public, to despise what they hold sacred ? Or shall we suppose this author so astonishingly ignorant, as to think that all men now, whose favour is worth asking, have given up the doctrine of the New Testament ? If he does, he is greatly mistaken.

3. In fine, I ask, where was the *justice* of this proceeding ? Is there so little to be said for the doctrine of original sin, that it is not

2. The wrath of man praiseth God as it is the instrument in his hand for bringing sinners to repentance, and for the correction and improvement of his own children. Whatever be the nature of the affliction with which he visits either persons, families, or nations; whatever be the disposition or intention of those whose malice he employs as a scourge, the design on his part is, to rebuke men for iniquity, to bring them to repentance, and to promote their holiness and peace. The salutary nature, and sanctifying influence of affliction in general, is often taken notice of in scripture, both as making a part of the purpose of God, and the experience of his saints*.

Now, no affliction, says the apostle, for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them, which are exercised thereby. But what we are particularly led to observe by the subject of this discourse is, that the wrath of man, or the violence of the oppressor, praiseth God in this respect, for it has a peculiar tendency to alarm the secure conscience, to convince and humble the obstinate sinner. This is plain from the nature of the thing, and from the testimony of experience. Public calamities, particularly the destroying sword, is so awful that it cannot but have a powerful influence in leading men, to consider the presence and the power of God. It threatens them not only in themselves, but touches them in all that is dear to them, whether relations or possessions. The prophet Isaiah says †, *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee,---for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* He considers it as the most powerful mean of alarming the secure, and subduing the obstinate. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not*

to be refuted, but despised? Is the state of the world such, as to render this doctrine not only false, but incredible? Has the fruit been of such a quality as to exclude all doubts of the goodness of the tree?---On the contrary, I cannot help being of opinion, that such has been the visible state of the world in every age, as cannot be accounted for on any other principles, than what we learn from the word of God, that *the imagination of the heart of man is only evil from his youth, and that continually,* Gen. vi. 5.---viii. 21.

* Heb. xii. 11. † Isa. xxvi. 8, 9.

See,

see, but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them*. It is also sometimes represented as a symptom of a hopeless and irrecoverable state, when public judgments have no effect. Thus saith the prophet Jeremiah †, *O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.* We can easily see in the history of the children of Israel, how severe strokes brought them to submission and penitence. *When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer ‡.* Both nations in general, and private persons are apt to grow remiss and lax in a time of prosperity and seeming security; but when their earthly comforts are endangered or withdrawn, it lays them under a kind of necessity to seek for something better in their place. Men must have comfort from one quarter or another. When earthly things are in a pleasing and promising condition, too many are apt to *find their rest*, and be satisfied with them as their only portion. But when the vanity and passing nature of all created comfort is discovered, they are compelled to look for something more durable as well as valuable. What therefore can be more to the praise of God, than that when a whole people have forgotten their resting place, when they have abused their privileges, and despised their mercies, they should, by distress and suffering, be made to *hearken to the rod*, and return to their duty?

THERE is an inexpressible depth and variety in the judgments of God, as in all his other works; but we may lay down this as a certain principle, that if there were no sin, there could be no suffering. Therefore they are certainly for the correction of sin, or for the trial, illustration, and perfecting of the grace and virtue of his own people. We are not to suppose, that those who suffer most, or who suffer soonest, are therefore more criminal than others. Our Saviour himself thought

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* Isa. xxvi. 11. † Jer. v. 3. ‡ Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35.

it necessary to give a caution against this rash conclusion as we are informed by the evangelist Luke, *There were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish* *. I suppose we may say, with sufficient warrant, that it often happens, that those for whom God hath designs of the greatest mercy, are first brought to the trial, that they may enjoy, in due time, the salutary effect of the unpalatable medicine.

I MUST also take leave to observe, and I hope no pious humble sufferer will be unwilling to make the application, that there is often a discernable mixture of sovereignty and righteousness in providential dispensations. It is the prerogative of God to do what he will with his own; but he often displays his justice itself, by throwing into the furnace those, who, though they may not be visibly worse than others, may yet have more to answer for, as having been favoured with more distinguished privileges, both civil and sacred. It is impossible for us to make a just and full comparison of the character either of persons or nations, and it would be extremely foolish for any to attempt it, either for increasing their own security, or impeaching the justice of the Supreme Ruler. Let us therefore neither forget the truth, nor go beyond it. *His mercy fills the earth.* He is also *known by the judgment which he executeth.* The wrath of man in its most tempestuous rage, fulfills his will, and finally promotes the good of his chosen.

3. The wrath of man praiseth God, as he sets bounds to it, or restrains it by his providence, and sometimes makes it evidently a mean of promoting and illustrating his glory.

THERE is no part of divine providence in which a greater beauty and majesty appears, than when the Almighty Ruler turns the councils of wicked men into confusion, and makes them militate against themselves. If the Psalmist may be thought to have had a view in this text

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* Luke xiii. 1, 2, 3.

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Isaiah

to the truths illustrated in the two former observations, there is no doubt at all that he had a particular view to this, as he says in the latter part of the verse, *the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*. The scripture abounds with instances, in which the designs of oppressors were either wholly disappointed, or in execution fell far short of the malice of their intention; and in some they turned out to the honour and happiness of the persons or the people, whom they were intended to destroy. We have an instance of the first of these in the history to which my text relates *. We have also an instance in Esther, in which the most mischievous designs of Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, against Mordecai, the Jew, and the nation from which he sprung, turned out at last to his own destruction, the honour of Mordecai, and the salvation and peace of his people.

FROM the New Testament I will make choice of that memorable event on which the salvation of believers in every age rests as its foundation, the death and sufferings of the Son of God. This the great adversary, and all his agents and instruments prosecuted with unrelenting rage. When they had blackened him with slander, when they had scourged him with shame, when they had condemned him in judgment, and nailed him to the cross, how could they help esteeming their victory complete? But, oh the unsearchable wisdom of God! they were but perfecting the great design laid for the salvation of sinners. Our blessed Redeemer, by his death, finished his work, overcame principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross. With how much justice do the apostles and their company offer this doxology to God? *They lift up their voice with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus,*
whom

* The matter is fully stated and reasoned upon by the prophet Isaiah, chap. x. from the 5th to the 19th verse.

*whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done *.*

IN all after ages, in conformity to this, the deepest laid contrivances of the prince of darkness, have turned out to the confusion of their author; and I know not, but considering his malice and pride, this perpetual disappointment, and the superiority of divine wisdom, may be one great source of his suffering and torment. The cross hath still been the banner of truth, under which it hath been carried through the world. Persecution has been but as the furnace to the gold, to purge it of its dross, to manifest its purity, and increase its lustre. It was taken notice of very early, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity; the more abundantly it was shed, the more plentifully did the harvest grow.

So certain has this appeared, that the most violent infidels, both of early and later ages, have endeavoured to account of it, and have observed, that there is a spirit of obstinacy in man, which inclines him to resist violence, and that severity doth but increase opposition, be the cause what it will. They suppose that persecution is equally proper to propagate truth and error. This, though in part true, will by no means generally hold. Such an apprehension, however, gave occasion to a glorious triumph of divine providence, of an opposite kind, which I must shortly relate to you. One of the Roman emperors, Julian, surnamed the apostate, perceiving how impossible it was to suppress the gospel by violence, endeavoured to extinguish it by neglect and scorn. He left the Christians unmolested for sometime, but gave all manner of encouragement to those of opposite principles, and particularly to the Jews, out of hatred to the Christians; and that he might bring public disgrace upon the Galileans, as he affected to stile them, he encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and visibly refute the prophecy of Christ, that it should lie under perpetual desolation. But this profane attempt

* Acts iv. 24, --- 28.

attempt was so signally frustrated, that it served as much as any one circumstance, to spread the glory of our Redeemer, and establish the faith of his saints. It is affirmed by some ancient authors, particularly by Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen historian, that fire came out of the earth and consumed the workmen when laying the foundation. But in whatever way it was prevented, it is beyond all controversy, from the concurring testimony of heathens and Christians, that little or no progress was ever made in it, and that in a short time, it was entirely defeated.

It is proper here to observe, that at the time of the Reformation, when religion began to revive, nothing contributed more to facilitate its reception, and increase its progress, than the violence of its persecutors. Their cruelty, and the patience of the sufferers, naturally disposed men to examine and weigh the cause to which they adhered with so much constancy and resolution. At the same time also, when they were persecuted in one city they fled to another, and carried the discoveries of Popish fraud to every part of the world. It was by some of those who were persecuted in Germany, that the light of the reformation was brought so early into Britain.

THE power of divine providence appears with the most distinguished lustre, when small and inconsiderable circumstances, and sometimes, the weather and seasons have defeated the most formidable armaments, and frustrated the best concerted expeditions. Near two hundred years ago, the monarchy of Spain was in the height of its power and glory, and determined to crush the interest of the reformation. They sent out a powerful armament against Britain, giving it ostentatiously, and in my opinion profanely, the name of the Invincible Armada. But it pleased God so entirely to discomfit it by tempests, that a small part of it returned home, though no British force had been opposed to it at all.

WE have a remarkable instance of the influence of small circumstances of providence in the English history. The two most remarkable persons in the civil wars, had earnestly desired to withdraw themselves from the contentions of the times, Mr. Hampden and Oliver Crom-

well. They had actually taken their passage in a ship for New-England, when by an arbitrary order of council they were compelled to remain at home. The consequence of this was, that one of them was the soul of the republican opposition to monarchical usurpation during the civil wars; and the other, in the course of that contest, was the greatest instrument in bringing the tyrant to the block.

THE only other historical remark I am to make is, that the violent persecution which many eminent Christians met with in England from their brethren, who called themselves Protestants, drove them in great numbers to a distant part of the world, where the light of the gospel and true religion were unknown. Some of the American settlements, particularly those in New-England, were chiefly made by them; and as they carried the knowledge of Christ to the dark places of the earth, so they continue themselves in as great a degree of purity of faith, and strictness of practice, or rather a greater, than is to be found in any protestant church now in the world. Does not the wrath of man in this instance praise God? Was not the accuser of the brethren, who stirs up their enemies, thus taken in his own craftiness, and his kingdom shaken by the very means which he employed to establish it *?

II. I proceed now to the second general head, which was to apply the principles illustrated above to our present situation, by inferences of truth for your instruction and comfort, and by suitable exhortations to duty in this important crisis. And,

IN the first place, I would take the opportunity on this occasion, and from this subject, to press every hearer to a sincere concern for his own soul's salvation. There are times when the mind may be expected to be more awake to divine truth, and the conscience more open

* Lest this should be thought a temporising compliment to the people of New-England, who have been the first sufferers in the present contest, and have set so noble an example of invincible fortitude in withstanding the violence of oppression, I think it proper to observe, that the whole paragraph is copied from a sermon on Psalm lxxiv. 22. prepared and preached in Scotland, in the month of August, 1758.

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to the arrows of conviction than at others. A season of public judgment is of this kind, as appears from what has been already said. That curiosity and attention at least are raised, in some degree, is plain from the unusual throng of this assembly. Can you have a clearer view of the sinfulness of your nature, than when the rod of the oppressor is lifted up, and when you see men putting on the habit of the warrior, and collecting on every hand the weapons of hostility and instruments of death? I do not blame your ardour in preparing for the resolute defence of your temporal rights. But consider, I beseech you, the truly infinite importance of the salvation of your souls. Is it of much moment whether you and your children shall be rich or poor, at liberty or in bonds? Is it of much moment whether this beautiful country shall increase in fruitfulness from year to year, being cultivated by active industry, and possessed by independent freemen, or the scanty produce of the neglected fields shall be eaten up by *hungry publicans*, while the timid owner trembles at the *tax-gatherers* approach? And is it of less moment, my brethren, whether you shall be the heirs of glory, or the heirs of hell? Is your state on earth for a few fleeting years of so much moment? And is it of less moment, what shall be your state through endless ages? Have you assembled together willingly to hear what shall be said on public affairs, and to join in imploring the blessing of God on the counsels and arms of the United Colonies? And can you be unconcerned, what shall become of you for ever, when all the monuments of human greatness shall be laid in ashes? For, *the earth itself, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.*

WHEREFORE, my beloved hearers, as the ministry of reconciliation is committed to me, I beseech you in the most earnest manner, to attend to *the things that belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes.* How soon, and in what manner a seal shall be set upon the character and state of every person here present, it is impossible to know, for he who only can know does not think proper to reveal it. But you may rest assured, that there is no time more suitable, and that there is none

so safe as that which is present, since it is wholly uncertain whether any other shall be yours. Those who shall first fall in battle, have not many more warnings to receive. There are some few daring and hardened sinners who despise eternity itself, and set their Maker at defiance; but the far greater number by staving off their convictions to a more convenient season, have been taken unprepared, and thus eternally lost. I would therefore earnestly press the apostles exhortation, *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* *

SUFFER me to beseech you, or rather to give you warning not to rest satisfied with a form of godliness, denying the power thereof. There can be no true religion, till there be a discovery of your lost state by nature and practice, and an unfeigned acceptance of Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel. Unhappy they who either despise his mercy, or are ashamed of his cross! Believe it, *there is no salvation in any other. There is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Unless you are united to him by a lively faith, not the resentment of a haughty monarch, but the sword of divine justice hangs over you, and the fulness of divine vengeance shall speedily overtake you. I do not speak this only to the heaven-daring profligate, or groveling sensualist, but to every insensible secure sinner; to all those however decent and orderly in their civil deportment, who live to themselves, and have their part and portion in this life; in fine, to all who are yet in a state of nature, for *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* The fear of man may make you hide your profanity; prudence and experience may make you abhor intemperance and riot; as you advance in life, one vice may supplant another and hold its place; but nothing less than the sovereign grace of God can produce a saving change of heart and temper, or fit you for his immediate presence.

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* 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.

2. FROM what has been said upon this subject, you may see what ground there is to give praise to God for his favours already bestowed on us, respecting the public cause. It would be a criminal inattention not to observe the singular interposition of providence hitherto, in behalf of the American colonies. It is, however, impossible for me, in a single discourse, as well as improper at this time to go through every step of our past transactions; I must therefore content myself with a few remarks. How many discoveries have been made of the designs of enemies in Britain and among ourselves, in a manner as unexpected to us as to them, and in such season as to prevent their effect? What surprizing success has attended our encounters, in almost every instance? Has not the boasted discipline of regular and veteran soldiers been turned into confusion and dismay before the new and *maiden* courage of freemen, in defence of their property and right? In what great mercy has blood been spared on the side of this injured country? Some important victories in the south have been gained with so little loss, that enemies will probably think it has been dissembled; as many, even of ourselves thought, till time rendered it undeniable. But these were comparatively of small moment. The signal advantage we have gained by the evacuation of Boston, the shameful flight of the army and navy of Britain, was brought about without the loss of a man. To all this we may add, that the counsels of our enemies have been visibly confounded, so that I believe I may say with truth, that there is hardly any step which they have taken, but it has operated strongly against themselves, and been more in our favour than if they had followed a contrary course.

WHILE we give praise to God, the supreme disposer of all events, for his interposition in our behalf, let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of an *arm of flesh*. I could earnestly wish, that while our arms are crowned with success, we might content ourselves with a *modest* ascription of it to the power of the highest. It has given me a great uneasiness to read some ostentatious, vaunting expressions
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in our news-papers, though happily, I think, much restrained of late. Let us not return to them again. If I am not mistaken, not only the holy scriptures in general, and the truths of the glorious gospel in particular, but the whole course of providence seems intended to abase the pride of man, and lay the vain glorious in the dust. How many instances does history furnish us with of those who, after exulting over, and despising their enemies, were signally and shamefully defeated * ? The truth is, I believe, the remark may be applied universally, and we may say, that through the whole frame of nature, and the whole system of human life, that which promises most, performs the least. The flowers of finest colour seldom have the sweetest fragrance. The trees of quickest growth or fairest form, are seldom of the greatest value or duration. Deep waters move with least noise. Men who think most are seldom talkative. And I think it holds as much in war as in any thing, that every *boaster* is a coward.

PARDON me, my brethren, for insisting so much upon this which may seem but an immaterial circumstance. It is in my opinion of very great moment. I look upon ostentation and confidence to be a sort of outrage upon providence, and when it becomes general, and infuses itself into the spirit of a people, it is a forerunner of destruction. How does Goliath the champion, armed in a most formidable manner express his disdain of David the stripling with his sling and his stone ? *And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he despised him : for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I dog, that thou comest out to me with staves ? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods ; and the Philistine said to David, Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. And how just and modest the reply ? Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear,*

* There is no story better known in British history, than that the officers of the French army, the night preceding the battle of Agincourt, played at dice for English prisoners before they took them, and the next day were taken by them.

and with a shield, but I come unto thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied*. I was well pleased with a remark of this kind thirty years ago, in a pamphlet †, in which it was observed, that there was a great deal of prophane ostentation in the names given to ships of war, as the Victory, the Valiant, the Thunderer, the Dreadnought, the Terrible, the Fire-brand, the Furnace, the Lightning, the Infernal, and many more of the same kind. This the author considered as a symptom of the national character and manners very unfavourable, and not likely to obtain the blessing of the God of Heaven ‡.

3. FROM what has been said you may learn, what encouragement you have to put your trust in God, and hope for his assistance in the present important conflict. He is the Lord of hosts, great in might, and strong in battle. Whoever hath his countenance and approbation, shall have the best at last. I do not mean to speak prophetically, but agreeably to the analogy of faith, and the principles of God's moral government. Some have observed, that true religion, and, in her train, dominion, riches, literature, and arts, have taken their course in a slow and gradual manner, from east to west since the earth was settled after the flood, and from thence forbode the future glory of America. I leave this as a matter rather of conjecture than certainty; but observe, that if your cause is just,---if your principles are pure,---and if your conduct is prudent, you need not fear the multitude of opposing hosts.

* 1 Sam. xvii. 42, 43, 44, 45. † Britain's Remembrancer.

‡ I am sensible that one or two of these were ships taken from the French, which brought their names with them. But the greatest number had their names imposed in England; and I cannot help observing, that the Victory, often celebrated as the finest ship ever built in Britain, was lost in the night without a storm, by some unknown accident, and about twelve hundred persons, many of them of the first families of the nation, were buried with it in the deep. I do not mean to infer any thing from this, but, that we ought to live under the practical persuasion of what no man will doctrinally deny, that there is no warring with the elements, or him who directs their force, that he is able to write disappointment on the wisest human schemes, and by the word of his power to frustrate the efforts of the greatest monarch upon earth.

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If your cause is just---you may look with confidence to the Lord and intreat him to plead it as his own. You are all my witnesses, that this is the first time of my introducing any political subject into the pulpit. At this season however, it is not only lawful but necessary ; and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any hesitation, that the cause in which America is now in arms, is the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, I am satisfied that the confederacy of the colonies has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition ; but of a deep and general conviction, that our civil and religious liberties, and consequently, in a great measure, the temporal and *eternal* happiness of us, and our posterity, depend on the issue. The knowledge of God and his truths have from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely confined to those parts of the earth, where some degree of liberty and political justice were to be seen, and great were the difficulties with which they had to struggle from the imperfection of human society, and the unjust decisions of usurped authority. There is not a single instance in history, in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage.

You shall not my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit, what you have never heard from me in conversation ; I mean, railing at the king personally, or even his ministers and the parliament, and people of Britain as so many barbarous savages. Many of their actions have probably been worse than their intentions. - That they should desire unlimited dominion, if they can obtain or preserve it, is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refuse submission to their unjust claims, because they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are so ; but because they are men, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature. I call this claim unjust of making laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever, because they are separated from us independent of us, and have an interest in opposing us

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Would any man who could prevent it, give up his estate, person, and family, to the disposal of his neighbour, although he had liberty to chuse the wisest and best master? Surely not. This is the true and proper hinge of the controversy between Great-Britain and America. It is however to be added, that such is their distance from us, that a wise and prudent administration of our affairs is as impossible as the claim of authority is unjust.---- Such is and must be their ignorance of the state of things here, so much time must elapse before an error can be seen and remedied, and so much injustice and partiality must be expected from the arts and misrepresentation of interested persons, that for these colonies to depend wholly upon the legislature of Great-Britain, would be like many other oppressive connexions, injury to the master, and ruin to the slave.

THE management of the war itself on their part, would furnish new proofs of this, if any were needful. Is it not manifest with what absurdity and impropriety they have conducted their own designs? We had nothing so much to fear as dissension; and they have by wanton and unnecessary *cruelty*, forced us into union. At the same time to let us see what we have to expect, and what would be the fatal consequence of unlimited subjection, they have uniformly called these acts *Lenity*, which filled this whole continent with resentment and horror. The ineffable disdain expressed by our fellow subject, in saying, "That he would not hearken to America, till she was at his feet," has armed more men, and inspired more deadly rage, than could have been done by laying waste a whole province with fire and sword. Again, we wanted not numbers, but time; and they sent over handful after handful, till we were ready to oppose a multitude greater than they have to send. In fine, if there was one place stronger than the rest, and more able and willing to resist, there they made the attack, and left the others till they were duly informed, completely incensed, and fully furnished with every instrument of war.

I MENTION these things, my brethren, not only as grounds of confidence in God, who can easily overthrow

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the wisdom of the wise, but as decisive proofs of the impossibility of these great and growing states, being safe and happy when every part of their internal polity is dependent on Great-Britain. If, on account of their distance, and ignorance of our situation, they could not conduct their own quarrel with propriety for one year, how can they give direction and vigour to every department of our civil constitutions from age to age? There are fixed bounds to every human thing. When the branches of a tree grow very large and weighty, they fall off from the trunk. The sharpest sword will not pierce when it cannot reach. And there is a certain distance from the seat of government, where an attempt to rule will either produce tyranny and helpless subjection, or provoke resistance and effect a separation.

I HAVE said, if your principles are pure---The meaning of this is, if your present opposition to the claims of the British ministry does not arise from a seditious and turbulent spirit, or a wanton contempt of legal authority; from a blind and factious attachment to particular persons or parties; or from a selfish rapacious disposition, and a desire to turn public confusion into private profit---but from a concern for the interest of your country, and the safety of yourselves and your posterity.---On this subject I cannot help observing, that though it would be a miracle if there were not many selfish persons among us, and discoveries now and then made of mean and interesting transactions, yet they have been comparatively inconsiderable both in number and effect. In general, there has been so great a degree of public spirit, that we have much more reason to be thankful for its vigour and prevalence, than to wonder at the few appearances of dishonesty or disaffection. It would be very uncandid to ascribe the universal ardour that has prevailed among all ranks of men, and the spirited exertions in the most distant colonies to any thing else than public spirit. Nor was there ever perhaps in history so general a commotion from which religious differences have been so entirely excluded. Nothing of this kind has as yet been heard, except of late in the absurd, but malicious and detestable attempts of our few
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remaining enemies to introduce them. At the same time I must also, for the honour of this country observe, that though government in the ancient forms has been so long unhinged, and in some colonies not sufficient care taken to substitute another in its place; yet has there been, by common consent, a much greater degree of order and public peace, than men of reflection and experience foretold or expected. From all these circumstances I conclude favourably of the principles of the friends of liberty, and do earnestly exhort you to adopt and act upon those which have been described, and resist the influence of every other.

ONCE more, if to the justice of your cause, and the purity of your principles you add prudence in your conduct, there will be the greatest reason to hope, by the blessing of God, for prosperity and success. By prudence in conducting this important struggle, I have chiefly in view union, firmness, and patience. Every body must perceive the absolute necessity of union. It is indeed in every body's mouth, and therefore instead of attempting to convince you of its importance, I will only caution you against the usual causes of division. If persons of every rank, instead of implicitly complying with the orders of those whom they themselves have chosen to direct, will needs judge every measure over again, when it comes to be put in execution. If different classes of men intermix their little private views, or clashing interest with public affairs, and marshal into parties, the merchant against the landholder, and the landholder against the merchant. If local provincial pride and jealousy arise, and you allow yourselves to speak with contempt of the courage, character, manners, or even language of particular places, you are doing a greater injury to the common cause, than you are aware of. If such practices are admitted among us, I shall look upon it as one of the most dangerous symptoms, and if they become general, a presage of approaching ruin.

By firmness and patience, I mean a resolute adherence to your duty, and laying your account with many difficulties as well as occasional disappointments. In a for-

mer part of this discourse, I have cautioned you against ostentation and vain glory. Be pleased further to observe, that extremes often beget one another; the same persons who exult extravagantly on success, are generally most liable to despondent timidity on every little inconsiderable defeat. Men of this character are the bane and corruption of every society or party to which they belong; but they are especially the ruin of an army, if suffered to continue in it. Remember the vicissitude of human things, and the usual course of providence. How often has a just cause been reduced to the lowest ebb, and yet when firmly adhered to, has become finally triumphant? I speak this now while the affairs of the colonies are in so prosperous a state, lest this prosperity itself should render you less able to bear unexpected misfortunes.---- The sum of the whole is, that the blessing of God is only to be looked for by those who are not wanting in the discharge of their own duty. I would neither have you to trust in an arm of flesh, nor sit with folded hands and expect that miracles should be wrought in your defence. ---- This is a sin which is in scripture called *tempting God*. In opposition to it, I would exhort you as Joab did the host of Israel, who though he does not appear to have had a spotless character throughout, certainly in this instance spoke like a prudent general and a pious man. *Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God; and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight* *.

I SHALL now conclude this discourse by some exhortations to duty, founded upon the truths which have been illustrated above, and suited to the interesting state of this country at the present time; and,

I. SUFFER me to recommend to you an attention to the public interest of religion; or, in other words, zeal for the glory of God and the good of others. I have already endeavoured to exhort sinners to repentance; what I have here in view is to point out to you the concern which every good man ought to take in the national character and manners, and the means which he ought to use for promoting public virtue, and bearing down impiety

* 2 Sam. x. 12.

impiety and vice. This is a matter of the utmost moment, and which ought to be well understood, both in its nature and principles. Nothing is more certain than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners makes a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch even the best constitution will be ineffectual, and slavery must ensue. On the other hand, when the manners of a nation are pure, when true religion and internal principles maintain their vigour, the attempts of the most powerful enemies to oppress them are commonly baffled and disappointed. This will be found equally certain, whether we consider the great principles of God's moral government, or the operation and influence of natural causes.

WHAT follows from this? That he is the best friend to American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down prophanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country. Do not suppose, my brethren, that I mean to recommend a furious and angry zeal for the circumstantial of religion, or the contentions of one sect with another about their peculiar distinctions. I do not wish you to oppose any body's religion, but every body's wickedness. Perhaps there are few surer marks of the reality of religion, than when a man feels himself more joined in spirit to a true holy person of a different denomination, than to an irregular liver of his own. It is therefore your duty, in this important and critical season, to exert yourselves every one in his proper sphere, to stem the tide of prevailing vice, to promote the knowledge of God, the reverence of his name and worship, and obedience to his laws.

PERHAPS you will ask, what is it that you are called to do, for this purpose, farther than your own personal duty? I answer, this itself, when taken in its proper extent, is not a little. The nature and obligation of visible religion is, I am afraid, little understood, and less attended to.

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MANY from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocrisy, banish from their conversation and carriage, every appearance of respect and submission to the living God. What a weakness and meanness of spirit does it discover for a man to be ashamed in the presence of his fellow sinners, to profess that reverence to Almighty God which he inwardly feels? The truth is, he makes himself truly liable to the accusation which he means to avoid. It is as genuine, and perhaps a more culpable hypocrisy to appear to have less religion than you really have, than to appear to have more. This false shame is a more extensive evil than is commonly apprehended. We contribute constantly, though insensibly, to form each others character and manners; and therefore the usefulness of a strictly holy and conscientious deportment is not confined to the professor, but spreads its happy influence to all that are within its reach. I need scarcely add, that in proportion as men are distinguished by understanding, literature, age, rank, office, wealth, or any other circumstance, their example will be useful on the one hand, or pernicious on the other.

BUT I cannot content myself with barely recommending a silent example. There is a dignity in virtue which is entitled to authority, and ought to claim it. In many cases it is the duty of a good man, by open reproof and opposition, to wage war with profaneness. There is a scripture precept delivered in very singular terms, to which I beg your attention; *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but shalt in any ways rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him.* How prone are many to represent reproof as flowing from ill nature and furliness of temper? The Spirit of God, on the contrary, considers it as the effect of inward hatred, or want of genuine love, to forbear reproof when it is necessary, or may be useful. I am sensible there may, in some cases, be a restraint from prudence, agreeably to that caution of Solomon, *Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.* Of this every man must judge as well as he can for himself; but certainly, either by open reproof, or expressive silence, or speedy departure from such society, we ought to guard against being *partakers of other men's sins.*

To this let me add, that if all men are bound in some degree, certain classes of men are under peculiar obligations to the discharge of this duty. Magistrates, ministers, parents, heads of families, and those whom age has rendered venerable, are called to use their authority and influence for the glory of God and the good of others. Bad men themselves discover an inward conviction of this, for they are often liberal in their reproaches of persons of grave characters of religious profession, if they bear with patience the profanity of others. Instead of enlarging on the duty of men in authority in general, I must particularly recommend this matter to those who have the command of soldiers enlisted for the defence of their country. The cause is sacred, and the champions for it ought to be holy. Nothing is more grieving to the heart of a good man, than to hear from those who are going to the field, the horrid sound of cursing and blasphemy; it cools the ardour of his prayers, as well as abates his confidence and hope in God. Many more circumstances affect me in such a case, than I can enlarge upon, or indeed easily enumerate at present; the glory of God, the interest of the deluded sinner, going like a devoted victim and imprecating vengeance on his own head, as well as the cause itself committed to his care. We have sometimes taken the liberty to forebode the downfall of the British empire, from the corruption and degeneracy of the people. Unhappily the British soldiers have been distinguished among all the nations in Europe, for the most shocking profanity. Shall we then pretend to emulate them in this infernal distinction, or rob them of the horrid privilege? God forbid. Let the officers of the army in every degree remember, that as military subjection, while it lasts, is the most complete of any, it is in their power greatly to restrain, if not wholly to banish, this flagrant enormity.

2. I EXHORT all who are not called to go into the field, to apply themselves with the utmost diligence to works of industry. It is in your power, by this means, not only to supply the necessities, but to add to the strength of your country. Habits of industry prevailing in a society, not only increase its wealth, as their immediate

mediate effect, but they prevent the introduction of many vices, and are intimately connected with sobriety and good morals. Idleness is the mother or nurse of almost every vice; and want, which is its inseparable companion, urges men on to the most abandoned and destructive courses. Industry, therefore, is a moral duty of the greatest moment, absolutely necessary to national prosperity, and the sure way of obtaining the blessing of God. I would also observe, that in this, as in every other part of God's government, obedience to his will is as much a natural mean, as a meritorious cause of the advantage we wish to reap from it. Industry brings up a firm and hardy race. He who is inured to the labour of the field, is prepared for the fatigues of a campaign. The active farmer, who rises with the dawn, and follows his team or plow, must in the end be an overmatch for these effeminate and delicate soldiers, who are nursed in the lap of self-indulgence, and whose greatest exertion is in the important preparation for, and tedious attendance on, a masquerade, or midnight ball.

3. In the last place, suffer me to recommend to you frugality in your families, and every other article of expence. This the state of things among us renders absolutely necessary; and it stands in the most immediate connection both with virtuous industry, and active public spirit. Temperance in meals, moderation and decency in dress, furniture, and equipage, have, I think, generally been characteristics of a distinguished patriot. And when the same spirit pervades a people in general, they are fit for every duty, and able to encounter the most formidable enemy. The general subject of the preceding discourse has been the wrath of man praising God. If the unjust oppression of your enemies, which with-holds from you many of the usual articles of luxury and magnificence, shall contribute to make you clothe yourselves and your children with the works of your own hands, and cover your tables with the salutary productions of your own soil, it will be a new illustration of the same truth, and a real happiness to yourselves and your country.

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the purest principles and the noblest views. Consider, therefore, that the Christian character, particularly the self denial of the gospel, should extend to your whole deportment. In the early times of Christianity, when adult converts were admitted to baptism, they were asked among other questions, Do you renounce the world, its shews, its pomp, and its vanities? I do. The form of this is still preserved in the administration of baptism, where we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. This certainly implies not only abstaining from acts of gross intemperance and excess, but a humility of carriage, a restraint and moderation in all your desires. The same thing, as it is suitable to your Christian profession, is also necessary to make you truly independent in yourselves, and to feed the source of liberality and charity to others, or to the public. The riotous and wasteful liver, whose craving appetites make him constantly needy, is and must be subject to many masters, according to the saying of Solomon, *The borrower is servant to the lender*. But the frugal and moderate person, who guides his affairs with discretion, is able to assist in public counsels by a free and unbiassed judgment, to supply the wants of his poor brethren, and sometimes by his estate, and substance, to give important aid to a sinking country.

UPON the whole, I beseech you to make a wise improvement of the present threatening aspect of public affairs; and to remember that your duty to God, to your country, to your families, and to yourselves, is the same. True religion is nothing else but an inward temper and outward conduct, suited to your state and circumstances in providence at any time. And as peace with God, and conformity to him, adds to the sweetness of created comforts, while we possess them, so in times of difficulty and trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle, that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible foldier. God grant that in America, true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable; and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both.

THE END.

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T O T H E

NATIVES of SCOTLAND, residing in AMERICA.

Countrymen and Friends,

AS soon as I had consented to the publication of the foregoing Sermon, I felt an irresistible desire to accompany it with a few words addressed to you in particular. I am certain I feel the attachment of country as far as it is a virtuous or laudable principle, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, as far as it is a natural and pardonable prejudice. He who is so pleased may attribute it to this last when I say, that I have never seen cause to be ashamed of the place of my birth; that since the revival of arts and letters in Europe, in the close of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century, the natives of Scotland have not been inferior to those of any other country, for genius, erudition, military prowess, or any of those accomplishments which improve or embellish human nature. When to this it is added, that since my coming to America at an advanced period of life, the friendship of my countrymen has been as much above my expectation as desert; I hope every reader will consider what is now to be offered, as the effect, not only of unfeigned good-will, but of the most ardent affection.

It has given me no little uneasiness to hear the word *Scotch*, used as a term of reproach in the American controversy, which could only be upon the supposition that strangers of that country are more universally opposed to the liberties of America than those who were born in South-Britain, or in Ireland. I am sensible that this has been done in some news-papers and contemptible anonymous publications, in a manner that was neither warranted by truth, nor dictated by prudence.

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There are many natives of Scotland in this country, whose opposition to the unjust claims of Great-Britain has been as early and uniform, founded upon as rational and liberal principles, and therefore likely to be as lasting, as that of any set of men whatever. As to Great-Britain itself, time has now fully discovered that the real friends of America in any part of that kingdom were very few ; and those whose friendship was disinterested, and in no degree owing to their own political factions, still fewer. The wise and valuable part of the nation were, and as yet are, in a great measure ignorant of the state of things in this country ; neither is it easy for the bulk of a people to shake off their prejudices, and open their eyes upon the great principles of universal liberty. It is therefore at least very disputable, whether there is any just ground for the distinction between Scots and English on this subject at all.

THIS dispute, however, I do not mean to enter upon, because it is of too little moment to find a place here ; but supposing that, in some provinces especially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to support the usurpations of the parent state, I will first endeavour to account for it, by assigning some of its probable causes ; and then offer a few considerations which should induce them to wipe off the aspersions entirely, by a contrary conduct.

As to the first of these, I will mention what I suppose to have been the first and radical cause, and which gave birth to every other, of the disaffection of some of the natives of Scotland to the just privileges of America. What I have in view was the friends of liberty in many places of America, taking the part of, and seeming to consider themselves as in a great measure engaged in the same cause with, that very distinguished person, John Wilkes, Esq ; of London. This was done, not only in many writings and news-paper dissertations, but one or two colonies, in some of their most respectable meetings, manifested their attachment to him, and seemed to consider him as their patron and friend. No. 45, which was the most offensive number of a worthless paper, was repeated and echoed, by the most silly and

ridiculous allusions to it, through every part of the country, and by many who could not tell what was signified by the term.

It will not be necessary to say much on the prudence of such conduct, because I suppose those who expected Wilkes's mob would pull down the parliament-house, or that there would be insurrections all over the kingdom, in behalf of America, are by this time fully satisfied of their mistake. It appears now in the clearest manner, that, till very lately, those who seemed to take the part of America in the British parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not understand, or were not willing to admit the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham's bill for reconciliation would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the ministry would have consented to. The truth is, the far greatest part of the countenance given in Britain to the complaints of this country, was by those who had no other intention in it than to use them as an engine of opposition to the ministry for the time being. It is true, some of them have now learned to reason very justly, and upon the most liberal principles; but their number is not great, and it was not the case with any one speaker or writer, whose works I have had the opportunity of perusing, till the very last stage of the quarrel.

WHAT effect this Wilkism (if I may speak so) of many Americans may be supposed to have had upon the minds of gentlemen from Scotland, it is not difficult to explain. That gentleman, and his associates, thought proper to found the whole of their opposition to the then ministry, upon a contempt and hatred of the Scots nation; and by the most illiberal methods, and the most scandalous falsehoods, to stir up a national jealousy between the northern and southern parts of the island. There was not a vile term or hateful idea, which ancient vulgar animosity had ever used, though long union had made them scarcely intelligible, which he did not rake up and attempt to bring into credit, by writing and conversation. The consequence of this is well known. Wilkes and some others were burnt in effigy in Scotland; and it produced

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so general an attachment to the king and ministry, as has not yet spent its force. In these circumstances, is it to be wondered at that many who left Scotland, within the last fifteen years, when they heard Wilkes, and those who adhered to him, extolled and celebrated by the sons of liberty, should be apt to consider it as an evidence of the same spirit, and that they were engaged in support of the same cause? Perhaps we may go a little higher with this remark, in tracing political appearances to their source. It is generally said, that the king himself has discovered a violent, rancorous, personal hatred against the Americans. If this be true, and I know nothing to the contrary, it may be easily accounted for upon the very same principles.

I AM far from supposing, that this was a good reason for any man's being cool to the American cause, which was as different from that of Wilkes, as light is from darkness. It was indeed doing great dishonour to the noble struggle, to suppose it to have any connection with who should be in or out of court-favour at London; and therefore it was always my opinion, that those who railed against the king and ministry only, did not carry the argument home, nor fully understand the nature of their own plea. In order to justify the American opposition, it is not necessary to shew that the persons in power have invaded liberty in Britain; it is sufficient to say, that they, with the concurrence of the whole nation, have refused to suffer it to continue in the colonies.

THIS leads me to the second part of my design, which was to lay before you the reasons which, I think, should induce every lover of justice and of mankind, not only to be a well-wisher, but a firm and steadfast friend to America, in this important contest.

It has been often said, that the present is likely to be an important æra to America. I think we may say much more; it is likely to be an important æra in the history of mankind. In the ancient migrations, a new country was generally settled by a small unconnected, and often an ignorant band. The people and the soil were alike uncultivated, and therefore they proceeded to improvement by very slow degrees; nay, many of them fell back and

and degenerèd into a state vastly more savage than the people from whence they came. In America we see a rich and valuable soil, and an extensive country, taken possession of by the power, the learning, and the wealth of Europe. For this reason it is now exhibiting to the world, a scene which was never seen before. It has had a progress in improvement and population, so rapid as no political calculators have been able to ascertain. I look upon every thing that has been said upon this subject to be mere conjecture, except in such places as there has been an actual numeration. When men say that America doubles its number in fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, they speak by guess, and they say nothing. In some places that may be under or over the truth; but there are vast tracts of land that fill every year with inhabitants, and yet the old settled places still continue to increase.

It is proper to observe, that the British settlements have been improved in a proportion far beyond the settlements of other European nations. To what can this be ascribed? Not to the climate; for they are of all climates. Not to the people; for they are a mixture of all nations. It must therefore be resolved singly into the degree of British liberty which they brought from home, and which pervaded more or less their several constitutions. It has been repeated to us, I know not how often, by the mercenary short-sighted writers in favour of submission to, or re-union with Great-Britain, that we have thriven very much in past times by our dependance on the mother-country, and therefore we should be loth to part. These writers forget, that the very complaint is, that she will not suffer us to enjoy our antient rights. Can any past experience shew that we shall thrive under new impositions? I should be glad any such reasoners would attempt to prove that we have thriven by our dependance, and not by the degree of independence which we have hitherto enjoyed. If we have thriven by our dependance, I conceive it is a necessary consequence that those provinces must have thriven most which have been most dependant. But the contrary is self-evident. Those which have hitherto enjoyed the freest form of

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government, though greatly inferior in soil and climate, have yet outstripped the others in number of people and value of land, merely because the last were more under the influence of appointments and authority from home.

WHEN this is the undeniable state of things, can any person of a liberal mind wish that these great and growing countries should be brought back to a state of subjection to a distant power? And can any man deny, that if they had yielded to the claims of the British parliament, they would have been no better than a parcel of tributary states, ruled by lordly tyrants, and exhausted by unfeeling pensioners, under the commission of one too distant to hear the cry of oppression, and surrounded by those who had an interest in deceiving him. It ought, therefore, in my opinion, to meet with the cordial approbation of every impartial person, as I am confident it will of posterity, that they have united for common defence, and resolved that they will be both free and independent, because they cannot be the one without the other.

As this measure, long foreseen, has now taken place, I shall beg leave to say a few things upon it; in which I mean to shew, 1. That it was necessary. 2. That it will be honourable and profitable. And, 3. That, in all probability, it will be no injury, but a real advantage, to the Island of Great-Britain.

1. It had become absolutely necessary. All reconciliation, but upon the footing of absolute unconditional submission, had been positively refused by Great-Britain; unless, therefore, the colonies had resolved to continue in a loose and broken state, with the name of a government which they had taken arms to oppose, the step which they have now taken could not have been avoided. Besides, things had proceeded so far, and such measures had been taken on both sides, that it had become impossible to lay down a scheme by which *they* should be sure of our dependance, and *we*, at the same time, secured in our liberties. While things continued in their ancient state, there was perhaps a power on the part of each, of which they were hardly conscious, or
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were afraid and unwilling to exert. But after the encroachments had been made and resisted, to expect any thing else than a continual attempt to extend authority on the one hand, and to guard against it on the other, is to discover very little knowledge of human nature. In such a situation, though every claim of America should be yielded, she would soon be either in a state of continual confusion, or absolute submission. The king of England, living in his English dominions, would not, and indeed durst not, assent to any act of an American legislature, that was, or was supposed to be hurtful to his English subjects. This is not founded on conjecture, but experience. There is not (at least Dean Swift affirms it) any dependence of Ireland upon England, except an act of the Irish parliament, that the king of England shall be the king of Ireland. This last has a separate independent legislature, and in every thing else, but the above circumstance seems to be perfectly free; yet if any man should assert, that the one kingdom is not truly subject to the other, he would, in my opinion, know very little of the state and history of either.

2. A STATE of independency will be both honourable and profitable to this country. I pass over many advantages in the way of commerce, as well as in other respects, that must necessarily accrue from it, that I may dwell a little on the great and leading benefit, which is the foundation of all the rest. We shall have the opportunity of forming plans of government upon the most rational, just, and equal principles. I confess I have always looked upon this with a kind of enthusiastic satisfaction. The case never happened before since the world began. All the governments we have read of in former ages were settled by caprice or accident, by the influence of prevailing parties or particular persons, or prescribed by a conqueror. Important improvements indeed have been forced upon some constitutions by the Spirit of daring men, supported by successful insurrections. But to see government, in large and populous countries, settled from its foundation, by deliberate counsel, and directed immediately to the public good of the present and

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future generations, while the people are waiting for the decision with full confidence in the wisdom and impartiality of those to whom they have committed the important trust, is certainly altogether new. We learn indeed from history, that small tributes and feeble new settlements, did sometimes employ one man of eminent wisdom, to prepare a system of laws for them. Even this was a wise measure, and attended with happy effects. But, how vast the difference, when we have the experience of all past ages, the history of human society, and the well-known causes of prosperity and misery in other governments, to assist us in the choice?

THE prospect of this happy circumstance, and the possibility of losing it, and suffering the season to pass over, has filled me with anxiety for some time. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, there has been great unanimity and public spirit. The inhabitants of every province, and persons of all denominations, have vied with each other in zeal for the common interest. But, was it not to be feared that some men would acquire over-bearing influence? that human weakness and human passions would discover themselves, and prevent the finishing of what had been so happily begun? In the time of the civil wars in England, had they settled a regular form of government as soon as the parliament had obtained an evident superiority, their liberties would never have been shaken, and the revolution would have been unnecessary. But by delaying the thing so long, they were broken into parties and bewildered in their views, and at last tamely submitted, without resistance, to that very tyranny against which they had fought with so much glory and success. For this reason I think that every candid and liberal mind ought to rejoice in the measures lately taken through the states of America, and particularly the late declaration of independence, as it will not only give union and force to the measures of defence, while they are necessary, but lay a foundation for the birth of millions, and the future improvement of a great part of the globe.---I have only further to observe,

3. THAT I am confident the independence of America will, in the end, be to the real advantage of the Island of Great-Britain. Were this even otherwise, it would be a weak argument against the claim of justice. Why should the security or prosperity of this vast country be sacrificed to the supposed interest of an inconsiderable spot? But I cannot believe that the misery and subjection of any country on earth, is necessary to the happiness of another. Blind partiality and self-interest may represent it in this light; but the opinion is delusive, the supposition is false. The success and increase of one nation is, or may be, a benefit to every other. It is seldom, indeed, that a people in general can receive and adopt these generous sentiments; they are nevertheless perfectly just. It is industry only, and not possessions, that makes the strength and wealth of a nation; and this is not hindered, but encouraged, provoked, and rewarded by the industry of others*.

But to leave the general principle, or rather to apply it to the case of Great-Britain and America: What profit has the former hitherto received from the latter? And what can it reasonably expect for the future? Only its trade, and such part of that trade as tends to encourage the industry and increase the number of the inhabitants of that Island. It will be said, they intend to raise a large, clear, net revenue upon us, by taxation. It has been shewn by many, that all the taxes which they could raise, would only serve to feed the insatiable desire of wealth in placemen and pensioners, to increase the influence of the crown, and the corruption of the people. It was by the acquisition of numerous provinces that Rome hastened to its ruin. But even supposing it otherwise, and that without any bad consequence among themselves, they were to acquire a great addition to their yearly revenue, for every shilling they gained by taxes, they would lose ten in the way of trade. For a trifling addition to the sums of public money to be applied or wasted by ministers of state, they would lose ten times the quantity distributed among useful manufacturers,

* See David Hume's Essay on the jealousy of Trade.

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turers, the strength and glory of a state. I think this has been sometimes compared to the difference between draughts of spirituous liquors to intoxicate the head or weaken the stomach, and cool refreshing food to give soundness, health, and vigour to every member of the body.

THE trade, then, of America, as soon as peace is settled, will be as open to them as ever. But it will be said, they have now an exclusive trade, they will then but share it with other nations. I answer, an exclusive trade is not easily preserved, and when it is preserved, the restriction is commonly more hurtful than useful. Trade is of a nice and delicate nature; it is founded upon interest: It will force its way wherever interest leads, and can hardly by any art be made to go in another direction. The Spaniards have an exclusive trade, as far as they please to confine it, to their own plantations. Do they reap much benefit from it? I believe not. Has it made their own people more industrious at home? Just the contrary. Does it, in the natural course of things, make a people less careful to work as well and as cheap as others, to procure voluntary purchasers, when they know they can send their goods to those who are obliged to take them? Does it not both tempt and enable great merchants in the capital, to import from other nations what they can export to such a forced market, to advantage? By this means a considerable profit may come into the coffers of a few particulars, while no essential service is done to the people, and the ultimate profit is carried to that country where the goods are produced or fabricated. It has been repeatedly said, by political writers in England, that the balance of trade is against that country to every nation, excepting Portugal and their own plantations. I will not answer for the truth or universality of this assertion; but if it is true in any measure, I will venture to affirm, upon the principles of general reason, that the cause which produces it, is no other than the exclusive trade they have hitherto enjoyed to the American settlements.

But the circumstance which I apprehend will contri-

bute most to the interest of Great-Britain, in American Independence, is its influence in peopling and enriching this great continent. It will certainly tend to make the American States numerous, powerful, and opulent, to a degree not easily conceived. The great and penetrating Montesquieu, in his Spirit of Laws, has shewn in the clearest manner, that nothing contributes so much to the prosperity of a people, as the state of society among them, and the form of their government. A free government overcomes every obstacle, makes a desert a fruitful field, and fills a bleak and barren country with all the conveniencies of life. If so, what must be the operation of this powerful cause upon countries enjoying, in the highest degree, every advantage that can be derived from situation, climate, and soil? If the trade of America has hitherto been of so great benefit to England, how much more valuable may it be when these countries shall be still more highly improved, if she shall continue to enjoy it? This argument is liable to no objection but what may arise from the loss of an exclusive trade, which I have already considered. It may be added, however, that there is not now, nor ever has been, any aversion in the Americans to the people of Great-Britain, so that they may be sure of our trade, if they treat us as well as others; and if otherwise, they do not deserve it.

IMIGHT illustrate the argument, by stating the probable consequences of a contrary supposition. If Great-Britain should prevail, or overcome the American States, and establish viceroys, with absolute authority, in every province, all men of spirit and lovers of freedom would certainly withdraw themselves to a corner, if such could be found, out of the reach of tyranny and oppression. The numbers of the people at any rate would sensibly decrease, their wealth would be speedily exhausted, and there would remain only a nominal authority over a desolate country, in return for a vast expence laid out in the conquest, and in place of a great and profitable trade, by which both nations were made happy. One of the arguments, if they may be called so, made use of

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of against this country, and on which an obligation to obedience has been founded, is taken from the expence they have been at in blood and treasure for our protection in former wars. This argument has been often answered in the fullest manner; but if they shall continue to urge it, how fearful to think of the obligations we shall be under, after this war is finished? Then shall we owe them all the sums which they shall have laid out in subduing us, and all that we have spent in attempting to prevent it; all the blood which they shall have shed in attacking us, and all that we shall have spilt in our own defence. There is unquestionably a loss to Great-Britain, by the one side of the account as well as the other; and it tends to shew, in the clearest manner, the unspeakable folly, as well as great injustice, of the promoters of this war.

THUS I have stated to you, though very briefly, the principles on which I think the American cause ought to be pleaded, and on which it ought to be espoused and supported, by every lover of justice and of mankind. But though the general plea in justice were less clear than it is, there is a light in which the conduct of the opposers of it has always appeared to me unreasonable and ungenerous to the highest degree. That resistance to Great-Britain has been determined on, in the most resolute manner, through all the colonies, by a vast majority, is not only certain, but undeniable. In the beginning of the controversy, some writers, with an impudence hardly to be paralleled, called the fact in question, attempted to deceive the people in this country, and effectually deceived the people of England, by making them believe, that it was only a few factious and violent men that had engaged in the contest. It is not very long since a writer had the courage to assert, that, "nine tenths of the people of Pennsylvania were against independence." The falsehood of such misrepresentations is now manifest, and indeed was probably known from the beginning, by those who desired to have them believed. Taking this for granted, then, for an in-

inconsiderable minority, whether natives or strangers, to set themselves in opposition to the public councils, is contrary to reason and justice, and even to the very first principles of the social life.

If there is any principle that was never controverted upon the social union, it is, that as a body every society must be determined by the plurality. There was a time when it was not only just and consistent but necessary, that every one should speak his mind freely and fully of the necessity or expediency of resisting the authority of Great-Britain : But that time is over long ago. The measures being resolved upon, and the conflict begun, one who is barely neuter can scarce be forgiven ; a secret plodding enemy must be considered as a traitor. Every person who continued among us after the decisive resolutions formed by all the colonies, ought to be considered as pledging his faith and honour to assist in the common cause. Let me try to illustrate it by a similar case. Suppose that a ship at sea springs a leak, which exposes the whole company to the most imminent danger of perishing. Suppose a counsel is called of all the persons on board to determine what port they shall endeavour to gain. Then it is not only the right, but the duty of every one to speak his own judgment, and to press it upon others by every argument in his power. Suppose a great majority determines to push for a certain place, and to go to the pump by turns every quarter of an hour ; but that two, or three, or one, if you please, is of opinion that they should have gone another course, because of the wind, current, or any other circumstance, and that it would be best to change hands at the pump only every half hour. All this is well. But if after the determination, this same gentleman, because his advice was not followed, should refuse to pump at all, should silyly alter the ship's course, or deaden her way by every means in his power, or even should only by continual complaints and despondent fears, discourage others on whose activity the common safety depended. I desire to know what treatment he would receive or deserve ? Without doubt he would be thrown overboard in less

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time than I have taken to state the case. I am not able to perceive the least difference between this supposition and what takes place in America at the present time.

If this argument is just with respect to every inhabitant of the country, it ought to have some additional weight with those who are not natives, and whose residence is not certain, or has not been long. There is a great degree of indecency in such taking any part against what the majority of the inhabitants think to be their interest and that of their country. Were they even wrong, their mistake should be lamented, not resisted; on the contrary, it would be the part both of generosity and justice to support them effectually in a contest which wisdom would have declined. We see indeed every day melancholy instances of a base and selfish temper operating different ways. Many when they do not obtain that rank and honour which their pride and partiality think their due, or if their advice is not followed, immediately renounce the service of their country, and it may go to destruction for them. In opposition to this, let me recommend the example of the illustrious Fabius of Rome. He had given strict orders to all his officers not to engage the enemy, but to keep at a distance. Unluckily his lieutenant-general, by his own rashness, got entangled with a part of the army under his command, and was engaged. Fabius, preferring his country's good to fame, rivalry and safety, came immediately to his support with all expedition, and thereby gained a glorious and complete victory.

I HOPE you will take in good part the above reflections, which, I think, contain nothing that is virulent or indecent against man or body of men. They are the effects of judgment and conviction. The Author, as is probably known to many of you, has been personally abused in news-papers at home for the part he was supposed to have taken in the American cause, which was in some degree indeed the motive to this address. He hopes that an honest and faithful support of liberty and equal government in this part of the world, will be

no just reproach to his character, either as a scholar, a minister, or a christian, and that it is perfectly consistent with an undiminished regard for the country which gave him birth.

The above is submitted to your candid perusal, by

Gentlemen,

Your sincere friend, and

Obedient humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

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